



Bunyip
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Out with the old, in with the new

By Sarah Thomas

BY this time next year locals may be struggling to get their hands on a sherry – but winemakers hope plenty of consumers will be trying an apera instead.

Port (Portugal), sherry (Spain) and tokay (Hungary) are among the 11 'sensitive' European geographic indications (GIs) protected under an updated Australia-European wine trade agreement, which is expected to be finalised by mid-year.

Australian winemakers will then have a year to phase out the location names from their products – and 10 years to phase out tokay – so they have come up with alternatives.

Tawny has already begun being phased in instead of port, however the major changes are 'apera' instead of sherry, and 'topaque' instead of tokay.

Seppeltsfield fortified winemaker James Godfrey said this is a chance to re-brand the drinks and hopefully add to their existing market.

"There is perhaps a stigma associated with sherry – here's an opportunity to say 'here's some-

thing really great called apera,'" he said.

"We can retain our traditional customers and revitalise it to a whole generation of new consumers."

James has been on a committee that helped select the names, and he said it has been an "extensive and rigorous" process.

"It's a name that's going to be there supposedly forever," he said.

"If everyone embraces the names it will be extremely positive, give us our own identity and won't have any of the other associations that might have come with sherry.

"If you're going to make a change and everyone runs with it, it will work."

However he admitted not everyone – winemakers or consumers – will like the new names.

"Individuals will criticise the names, or have a positive or negative opinion," James said.

"It's been an extremely interesting process doing this, the initial reaction is 'this is a disaster waiting to happen', but when you see the research there

are a lot of positives to come out of it."

And while he said it was inevitable the Europeans would want their GIs protected, the wine industry also lost some of the style names such as 'fino'.

"If we had other countries using Coonawarra or Barossa we'd probably be not very happy about it, we can understand why they want to do it," he said.

"Losing the styles was disappointing, and we're still developing our own sub categories."

The other GIs officially protected under the agreement are Burgundy, Chablis, Champagne, Graves, Manzanilla, Moselle, Sauterne and White Burgundy.

Other changes that will begin once the agreement passes through Parliament include a standardisation of the tolerance between the label statement and the actual alcohol content.

Previously, fortified wines had only a 0.5 per cent tolerance, which has now been standardised to 0.8 per cent, which James said makes labelling easier.



Seppeltsfield fortified winemaker James Godfrey believes restrictions on traditional names like Sherry, Port and Tokay will see the industry successfully re-brand the drinks and add to their existing market.